



MILFORD FIRE DEPARTMENT

~2004 REPORT~

Richard J. Pauley
Fire Chief

Once again is it my privilege to submit the Annual Report of the Milford Fire Department. As in the past, the report for 2004 will outline where your Fire Department has been successful and present areas that need attention.

ACTIVITY LEVEL

The Fire Department responded to total of 1,070 requests for assistance in 2004. This was an increase of 63 calls, or 6.25%, as compared to 2003. As anticipated, this increase in activity level is attributed to the continued growth of the Town and we must now take the necessary steps to prepare this Department for this impact to best serve you and meet your needs. In 2004, we performed more than 4,819 hours of activity in supporting emergency and non-emergency requests for assistance.

The most notable incident of 2004 occurred on March 8th with the fire at the Garden Street School. At 12:43 AM the Milford Area Communications Center received a fire alarm activation via Master Box 413. The standard dispatch consisted of three engines and the ladder company and upon arrival fire personnel found a heavy smoke condition with fire already spreading rapidly in concealed wall and ceiling spaces. Fire Department personnel aggressively fought the fire inside the building for over an hour but were ordered out of the building due to deteriorating conditions and a partial ceiling collapse. At that time, we had to abandon our offensive attack and turn to defensive operations utilizing four ladder pipes and a deck gun to extinguish the fire bringing the incident under control at 4:51 AM. This incident went to a third alarm assignment bringing mutual aid from six communities and special calls for an additional tower ladder unit and two more engine companies. A subsequent investigation under the direction of the State Fire Marshal's Office determined the fire to be intentionally set and the investigation to determine the individual(s) responsible for this crime continues at this time.

During the summer and fall of this past year, the Department underwent a complete survey by the Insurance Services Office (ISO) to review the fire suppression capabilities of the community. This process was very detailed and included evaluation of three major public protection components: fire alarm and communication system (dispatching), fire department capabilities, and water supply system.

With respect to the Fire Department capabilities, areas reviewed included apparatus (condition and maintenance of our four engines and ladder truck), type of equipment carried on each truck, pumping capacity, and department staffing and training. The major insurers use this information obtained through this evaluation to underwrite and calculate premiums for residential, commercial, and industrial properties. Each

community is rated on a scale from 1 to 10, with a class 1 representing superior fire protection and a class 10 indicating that the area does not meet minimum recognition criteria. Communities are rated approximately every 10 years to determine if their fire suppression services are keeping pace with the demands of a changing environment. The survey resulted in Milford receiving a Class 4/9 rating. This rating is split due to the fact that the entire community is not protected by the municipal water system (fire hydrants) and this split, with a 9 in the non-hydrant areas, is very common in this type of situation.

Overall, our Class 4 rating is very good and better than many communities in New England with similar size and larger fire departments in terms of full-time staffing levels. In fact, as a Class 4 community we are in the top 10% when compared to the total evaluation of all other communities across the United States. The results of this survey provided excellent self-assessment information to serve as a benchmark for future improvements for this department and should provide for very competitive fire insurance premiums for building owners in the Town.

PERSONNEL

At the present time the Department is made up of four (4) full-time employees (the Chief, Fire Prevention Officer, Training Officer and Administrative Assistant) and 42 very dedicated and well trained on-call personnel. The full-time personnel are responsible for the administrative, fire prevention, training and preventative maintenance issues that need to be addressed on a daily basis as well responding to emergency calls. Milford continues to be the largest community in the State served by a predominantly "on-call" fire department, saving the taxpayers well over \$800,000.00 annually in associated full-time payroll expenses.

The 2005 Department operating budget reflects an effort to increase our daytime coverage by adding five on-call firefighter positions. We are at a point where our ability to handle weekday calls is significantly hampered due to the inability of most of our members to respond as a result of their employment obligations. The five daytime positions have the same parameters as our current 42 on-call members except for the fact they will be able to commit to weekday coverage. This is an effort to delay the immediate request for full-time personnel.

This past year we saw the retirement of Captain Alan Locicero, our Fire Prevention Officer, who had more than 22 years of service to the Town of Milford. "Albe" served the Department and his community with great distinction and dedication starting as a on-call firefighter and eventually becoming our first full-time Fire Prevention Officer. He was instrumental in establishing our much acclaimed and recognized fire and safety education programs in the school system and became a friend to all. We wish Albe the best in his retirement while enjoying a much warmer climate.

Captain Jason Smedick was hired as our new Fire Prevention Officer in October and is working out exceptionally well. Jason was previously the Fire Inspector for the Town of Amherst, and has several years experience in code compliance and related fire prevention activities and brings a wealth of knowledge and expertise to the Department.

Finally, I must recognize call Firefighter Chad Hutton who is on active duty in Iraq serving his country. Chad was called to active duty last February as a member of the

New Hampshire Army National Guard and is serving as a military police officer. We are eagerly awaiting his safe return home and our thoughts are always with him.

TRAINING

All Department members are required to obtain State Firefighter Level I and be rescue certified within one year of joining the Department. In addition, each member is required to make a minimum of two training sessions monthly. In 2004, five members earned their State Firefighter Level I certification and two members earned their State Firefighter Level II certifications. In addition, one member earned his New Hampshire certified Fire Officer I & II designations and three members became driver/operator qualified. Overall, the members of this Department participated in over 5,425 hours of training in 2004 ranging from introductory fire fighting techniques to large-scale incident management.

FIRE PREVENTION

The Fire Prevention Division continues to be very busy as the growth of the Town continues. Major residential projects the Department reviewed (site plan, in progress construction, and final certificates of occupancy) include The Belmont, The Stone House, expansion of the Mill Apartments, and, continued work on Badger Hill, Federal Pointe, Ledgewood Estates and Patch Hill. Major commercial or business projects included Granite State Boat Works, Milford Veterinary Clinic and upgrades or expansion of Hampshire Hills Sports and Fitness Club and The Mile Away Restaurant.

As outlined in the past, new construction and renovation projects (including single-family residences) require significant inspection activity for initial site work, underground tanks, mechanical equipment, fire alarm and suppression systems and final certificates of occupancy. A significant amount of time is required for initial inspections and in many cases re-inspection of these occupancies as well as existing buildings and occupancies for ongoing life safety and fire prevention compliance.

Overall, this Department issued 270 alarm system permits, 12 assembly permits, 18 blasting permits, 691 brush and outdoor burning permits, 271 mechanical permits (furnace, boiler or hot water heater), 51 underground LP-gas tank permits and 20 other or miscellaneous permits. Other inspectional activities included 80 gas-piping inspections, 27 fire protection system (fire alarm, sprinkler system, etc) inspections, and 52 miscellaneous inspections. Additional fire prevention activities included 19 consultations, 25 plan reviews, 18 investigations, and 41 fire or lockdown drills.

We continue to be recognized by our peers and the State of New Hampshire for our outstanding fire prevention efforts and programs in the schools. These programs include the "Learn Not to Burn" and "Risk Watch" curriculums in the elementary and middle school levels. I am extremely proud of the excellent working relationship and partnership that has been developed between this Fire Department and the Milford School System. The support and dedication of the teachers and administrative staff in implementing these programs has been exceptional and their efforts in educating our youth in fire safety and other risk prevention activities has without a doubt had a significant positive impact on our kids.

EQUIPMENT

We were able to purchase 46 sets of new structural firefighting protective clothing (lightweight turnout coats, pants and boots) for our personnel, new gear storage racks, and a heavy-duty washing machine through a FEMA Fire Act grant in the amount of \$82,500.00. This new gear provides the best in thermal and heat protection for our personnel in fire situations. The overall grant award saved the Town over \$74,000.00 by not having to pay for this needed equipment through the regular budget process.

In addition, the Town received just over \$31,000.00 in Homeland Security Grant money, which has allowed us to purchase hazardous materials response equipment inclusive of combustible gas meters, chemical resistant protective clothing, and decontamination equipment.

APPARATUS AND FACILITY

Engine 2: I regret to inform you that we have had significant reoccurring problems with Engine 2, our newest piece of fire apparatus, a 2003 Pierce Dash. These problems are quite significant in nature and are inclusive of transmission, transfer case, and the fire pump itself. The manufacturer has attempted to correct these problems under warranty with no real success. The truck has been out of service in excess of 160 days over a two-year period and recently failed during a fire. We no longer have confidence in this truck and it is the position of both the leadership of the Town and this Department that it should be taken out of service and replaced immediately. We are currently working with Pierce Manufacturing to attempt to find a mutually agreeable solution to this issue; however, the actual disposition of this matter may take an extended period of time if we are not able to negotiate a solution that is in the best interest of the Town.

Engine 3: The condition of Engine 3, our 1982 Mack pumper continues to deteriorate due to corrosion and rust of the frame, chassis and cab body. We intended to replace this engine in 2005, but, as a result of the seriousness of the problems we are encountering with Engine 2 we will attempt to extend the life of Engine 3 one more year so that we can focus on Engine 2's replacement. However, it is imperative that we are able to replace Engine 3 in 2006, as at that time the truck will have had 24 years of service and its reliability will be even more in question.

Fire Station: As has been outlined since 1997, we need to address the space needs of this Department. We have outgrown the existing Fire Station. The lack of sufficient area for the parking and maintenance of apparatus/vehicles, administrative/fire prevention offices, training areas (especially cramped when more than one company meets on the same night) living quarters and storage space is clearly evident as this Department continues to provide for the needs of a growing community.

In addition, we have safety and security concerns with the need for the general public to pass through the apparatus bays to access the office area. While the existing Fire Station is in very good condition, it is simply too small for our needs and it is clear that we must prepare to expand the building. We will be working with the Town Facilities Committee in the next year to propose a solution for your consideration in the very near future.

The present station was built in 1974 and was projected to meet the needs of the community for 25 years. We are now into year 32 and must enlarge this facility.

Substation & Training Area: The Town is also in need of a substation at the west-end of the community with the most logical location on Heron Pond Road. Our response times to this section of Town are in excess of 12 minutes, which is not acceptable in an emergency. This substation has been in the Town's master plan for well over 10 years and we must make this a reality to better protect the residents and businesses in the area. In addition, this location would be ideal for a small training facility that would greatly enhance our ability to provide basic and specialized training.

The overall facilities needs of this Department must be addressed at this time as the situation hampers our ability to operate in the most efficient and effective manner. We need to expand the existing Fire Station as it provides excellent coverage and response capabilities to the downtown district and high-risk occupancies (nursing homes, elderly housing facilities, and the larger multi-family occupancies) and construct a substation at the west end of Town to better protect that section of the community.

SUMMARY

I am pleased to report that, despite our existing facility issues and the challenges we have faced with one piece of fire apparatus this past year, the overall state of your Fire Department is excellent. The Milford Fire Department has an excellent reputation throughout the State, and New England for that matter, as a progressive, responsive well-trained and equipped organization. This reputation has been well earned by the members of this Department, but you as the taxpayers have played a major role in helping us to achieve this recognition. Your continuous and solid support of our requests has provided the resources we need to best serve you and that is very much appreciated.

I would also like to thank the Board of Selectmen, the Town Administrator, Budget Advisory Committee, and my fellow department heads for their assistance this past year. As citizens of the Town you should take great satisfaction in knowing that we have a very dedicated and competent group of individuals who work for you and truly put their best foot forward every day.

Finally, above all I need to recognize the hard work and dedication of the members of this Fire Department who are the backbone of the organization. Our firefighters make themselves available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, at significant personal sacrifice. At a moments notice they will respond to a pager activation to any request for assistance, without hesitation, putting their personal needs last. Their dedication is unsurpassed and I am exceptionally proud of every member of this Department. On behalf of the Milford Fire Department, have a happy and safe 2005.

Respectfully submitted,

Richard J. Pauley, Jr., Fire Chief

2004 Incident Reports

<u>Fire – All Types</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>False Alarm calls</u>	<u>Total</u>
Building fires	14	Alarm sounded/malfunction	86
Chimney fires	6	Alarm activation/smoke removal	60
Cooking fire/confined	2	Unintentional alarm transmission	48
Oil burner/boiler malfunction	6	Malicious false alarm	9
Vehicle fires	6	Carbon monoxide alarm/false	8
Brush/woodland/outside fire	9	Alarm sounded/no fire found	26
Dumpster/rubbish fire	7	False alarm/all other	22
Illegal/non permit fire	14	Sprinkler activation/no fire	3
Fire/other miscellaneous	12		
Fireworks	1	<u>Public Assistance/Water problem</u>	
Authorized/control burn	13	Smoke/odor removal	32
Mutual aid given/building/brush /station coverage	8	Water problem/evacuation	33
		Person in distress	1
		Police assist	3
<u>Rescue & EMS Calls</u>		Public service assist	11
Medical/ambulance assist	44	Animal rescue	1
Motor vehicle accident/injuries	26	Citizen complaint	2
Motor vehicle accident/extrication	13	Service calls/assist public/ non-emergency	359
Vehicle accident/general cleanup	53		
Rescue/other	3		
		<u>Severe Weather</u>	
<u>Hazardous Condition Calls</u>		Lightning strike	6
Flammable/combustible liquid spill	14	Flood assessment	1
Gas leak natural or LP-G	9		
Carbon monoxide incident	6	Total calls for 2004	1,070
Arcing equipment/electrical problem/light ballast	14		
Power lines down	17		
Building Collapse	1		
Hazardous condition/other	8		
		<u>Increase of 63 calls in 2004 compared to year 2003</u>	
<u>Good Intent calls</u>			
Dispatched/cancelled in route	4		
Steam/vapor mistaken for smoke/ smoke scare	10		
Hazardous materials investigation	4		
Good Intent call/other	35		